



# March Update

Spotlight on ACA Re-Accreditation and WTSP Mission Change

Tennessee Department of Correction | March 2016



# Overview

As we continue to move forward in the new year, the Tennessee Department of Correction is undertaking several innovative initiatives to advance our unwavering mission of operating safe and secure prisons and providing effective community supervision in order to enhance public safety. We are pleased to share the work we do and strive to keep you informed of our progress and address any questions that may arise.

## **ACA Re-accreditation**

The Tennessee Department of Correction is one of only a handful of correctional systems to hold the American Correctional Association's Golden Eagle Award for full accreditation. We are pleased to announce, TDOC will continue to hold that distinction following successful re-accreditation audits at four prison facilities: Morgan County Correctional Complex, Mark Luttrell Correctional Center, Tennessee Prison for Women and West Tennessee State Penitentiary.

The Golden Eagle Award represents the highest commitment to excellence and dedication to enhancing the safety of the public, staff, and offenders. We would like to recognize our exceptional team of correctional professionals. Their dedicated work enables us to achieve our core mission of running safe, secure prisons and we are proud to see their efforts recognized by the ACA with this honor.

## **Staffing Update**

### **Current State**

The Department continues to make significant advances in the area of staff recruitment and retention. During the first half of FY16, the turnover rate for the correctional security series was 17% and overall vacancy rates have continued to trend downward. As of March 1, 2016, the total number of correctional officer vacancies had dropped to 209 statewide according to Edison. We attribute this progress to improvements in our onboarding process including sign-on bonuses and increased mentorship for new correctional officers in addition to referral bonuses for existing staff. West Tennessee continues to be a challenging region for recruitment due to increased competition from other industries and a depleted labor pool. The mission change at West Tennessee State Penitentiary will help to address this by reducing security staffing needs at that location.

*Statewide,  
Correctional  
Officer vacancies  
have dropped  
from 302 on  
8/1/15 to 209 on  
3/1/16*

In December, we shared the results of a scheduling survey sent to prison security staff in partnership with the Tennessee State Employees Association (TSEA). Staff at four prisons opted to move from the current 8.5 hour shift to 12-hour shifts. We worked closely to train affected staff and human resources teams at those facilities and have now implemented the new shift schedule.

### Next Steps

The Department continues to move forward with intensive recruitment efforts throughout the state. We plan to launch a multi-faceted outreach effort at universities, community colleges and technical schools throughout March and April and career fairs will continue to be held in locations across the state.



### ***Community Supervision Update***

Our Community Supervision team works diligently to keep Tennesseans safe by providing effective supervision for nearly 80,000 offenders statewide. We constantly seek to advance our mission of enhancing public safety by evaluating our processes and listening to members of the communities we serve.

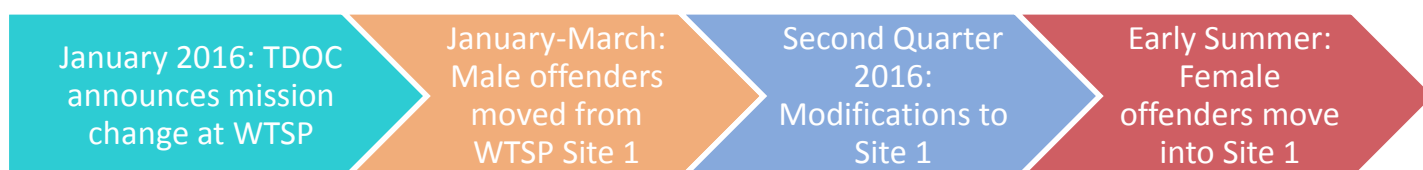
Recently, we've made minor adjustments to our standards of supervision. These adjustments are designed to increase supervision for offenders who need it, while also incentivizing compliant behavior. Effective January 1, 2016, low-risk offenders who meet certain requirements may not have to report in a probation parole office as often; instead, probation parole officers will ramp up checks for those offenders at their homes and jobs, and increase collateral checks. This allows these individuals to work and tend to their families without having to take time off from their jobs for office visits as frequently, thus providing an incentive for them to remain compliant and become productive members of society. Reducing the number of office visits for low-risk offenders also allows us to increase more intensive in-office supervision for higher risk offenders.

These minor adjustments were thoroughly vetted to ensure they would increase offender accountability while allocating our resources in the most effective way possible in order to enhance public safety.

### ***West Tennessee State Penitentiary Mission Change***

In January, TDOC announced a mission change at West Tennessee State Penitentiary and Mark Luttrell Correctional Center. As mentioned earlier, WTSP Site 1 will convert to a female facility and Site 2 will operate as a high-security male prison. Each site will operate independently. This change at WTSP also affects MLCC, TPFW and BCCX. Mark Luttrell will become a transitional employment center for male offenders nearing the completion of their sentences. These changes will assist in managing the state's growing female offender population, as well as advance our focus on ensuring returning offenders have the programming and education necessary to reenter the community ready to work.

While there is a great deal of work that must still be done to make this happen, we are making great progress. The ramp down of male offenders on Site 1 is well underway, and moving ahead of schedule. In late February, we reopened a max unit in Site 2. Construction has also begun on a new fenced-in recreation area at Site 1, and once the male offenders are out of that site, gender specific modifications will take place. In addition, training will be provided to staff as needed prior to the repopulating of Site 1. The goal is to have the first female offender in WTSP Site 1 in early summer.



### ***Driver's License and State ID Program***

Lack of valid, government-issued identification is one of the single largest barriers to successful reentry for offenders leaving prison. Without valid ID, it is often impossible for offenders to find employment, housing and other resources. This can lead to reoffending and a return to the state prison system, at a cost of \$74 per day to Tennessee taxpayers. Ensuring offenders have a valid ID at release increases public safety by removing many of those barriers, thus encouraging an offender to change criminal behavior and become a successful, productive member of society.

To address this need, TDOC and the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DOSHS) entered into an agreement allowing TDOC to purchase driver's license issuance equipment and install it in prison facilities. The purchase was made using existing resources; no new taxpayer dollars or staffing was needed. In late February 2016, TDOC began processing the first Tennessee ID applications and driver's license renewals for eligible offenders nearing release. The partnership with DOSHS also allows TDOC to monitor the status of valid driver's licenses and state IDs of offenders entering our custody to ensure it does not expire before their release. If an offender's driver's license is revoked or suspended, that individual will be issued a state ID card. It is also important to note, no original issuance driver's licenses will be processed in TDOC facilities and offenders must meet the same requirements for a state ID or driver's license renewal as the general public.

### ***Final Thoughts***

The Tennessee Department of Correction is committed to the mission of operating safe and secure prisons and providing effective community supervision in order to enhance public safety. More than 6,000 Tennesseans work as Correctional Professionals to ensure that the communities we serve are safer. While we

don't profess to be a perfect organization, this department is committed to a system of continuous improvement by constantly reviewing our practices, updating as needed and piloting the most innovative methods in offender management.